



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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### "VISION FOR THE FUTURE" CHARTS COURSE FOR U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

The future direction of the Nation's fish and wildlife conservation programs is the topic of a new document released by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Vision for the Future" redefines the Federal wildlife agency's mission, goals, and strategies for solving the complex conservation challenges of the 21st Century.

"The 'Vision' document is a navigation chart to help keep our ark afloat and on course," said Service Director John Turner.

"Our country has the finest fish and wildlife conservation programs in the world, and of course the Fish and Wildlife Service will continue its traditional conservation programs. But we also must recognize that society is changing and putting new pressures on the natural world," Turner said.

"The Service today faces the challenges of intensifying alteration of natural habitats, growing numbers of endangered species, and an increasingly urbanized population with little awareness of wildlife's needs. This is a worldwide trend and many other countries increasingly are looking to the Service for leadership on international conservation issues. The 'Vision' document will help us identify our Nation's highest wildlife priorities and focus our conservation resources where they can do the greatest good," Turner said.

A major purpose of the "Vision" document is to give members of the public and agency employees greater input into how the Fish and Wildlife Service sets priorities. By more clearly identifying the Service's goals and funding priorities, the document also will help simplify the Federal budget process for the Administration and Congress.

"Vision for the Future" represents the Fish and Wildlife Service's adoption of "Total Quality Management," a system being widely implemented by Federal agencies to set priorities, measure progress, and meet the needs of their "customers."

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The report cites major fish and wildlife conservation issues now confronting the Service, such as:

- o declining populations of striped bass, salmonids, and other native fishes throughout much of their range over the past 15 years;
- o continent-wide declines in populations of ducks and many non-game migratory bird species;
- o loss and degradation of many wildlife habitats during the past century;
- o increasing worldwide extinctions of plants and animals; and
- o a growing urban population and changes in recreational choices that have resulted in a detachment of young people from the natural world.

To meet these and other challenges, Turner said the Fish and Wildlife Service will place greater emphasis on preserving ecosystems and the diverse natural abundance of fish and wildlife species; providing "watchable wildlife" programs and other opportunities for people to enjoy and learn about wildlife; encouraging environmentally sensitive economic growth to avoid or minimize conflicts between people and fish and wildlife needs; forming partnerships with private landowners, industries, and others to achieve conservation goals; and improving recruitment, training, and management of the agency's 7,500 employees.

Established as the Bureau of Biological Survey in 1885 to investigate the effects of birds on agricultural crops, the Fish and Wildlife Service has evolved over the years into an agency with complex responsibilities under a wide array of environmental laws. In FY 1991, the agency's budget topped \$1 billion for the first time. The Service's chief responsibilities include migratory birds, endangered species, freshwater and anadromous fish, and certain marine mammals. The agency manages more than 90 million acres of land encompassed in over 460 national wildlife refuges and other facilities; operates 75 national fish hatcheries; conducts research on contaminants, disease, and other factors affecting fish and wildlife populations; evaluates the environmental impacts of various types of development; monitors bird populations and establishes hunting regulations for migratory game birds; carries out listing and recovery activities for endangered species; administers a multi-million-dollar Federal Aid program for fish and wildlife restoration funded by special taxes on hunting and fishing equipment and motorboat fuels; and oversees a nationwide network of law enforcement agents.